

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 EUR-25 AID-20 OMB-01 CU-04

OPR-02 RSR-01 /152 W

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R 241945Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6371

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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TAGS: PINS, IN

SUBJECT: LEVEL OF VIOLENCE IN INDIA

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE LEVEL AND EXTENT OF VIOLENCE DURING THE LAST TWO WEEKS DECLINED COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS FORTNIGHT. VIOLENT AGITATIONS OVER FOODGRAIN SCARCITY AND PRICES WERE CONFINED LARGELY TO MADHYA PRADESH. URBAN WHITE-COLLAR EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING DOCTORS, NURSES, AND ELCTRIC POWER ENGINEERS, WENT OUT ON STRIKE OVER PAY AND PRESTIGE ISSUES. STUDENTS WERE ALSO RESTIVE. THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDED BY APPLYING THE DEFENSE OF INDIA RULES (DIR) TO STRIKERS AND PRICES, WITH LITTLE INITAL SUCCESS. END SUMMARY.

1. WITH THE END OF THE PRO-MOSCOW COMMUNIST (CPI) ALL-INDIA FOODGRAIN "DEHOARDING" CAMPAIGN IN THE SECOND WEEK OF AUGUST, THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE TRACEABLE TO FOODGRAIN SHORTAGES HAS DECLINED.

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IN MADHYA PRADESH, WHERE THE OPPOSITION JANA SANGH PARTY HAD

BEGUN DEMONSTRATIONS IN JULY, THE CPI PICKED UP WHERE THEY LEFT OFF. BY THE END OF THE CPI CAMPAIGN ON AUGUST 11, OVER 2,000 DEMONSTRATORS, INCLUDING PROMINENT CPI MEMBERS, WERE IN JAIL. STUDENTS AND OTHERS DEMONSTRATED AUGUST 12-19 IN INDORE, DHAR, BETUL, MORENA AND BHOPAL, CLASHING WITH POLICE WHO ATTEMPTED TO INHIBIT THEIR EFFORTS TO UNCOVER FOODGRAIN STOCKS IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC WAREHOUSES. IN BHOPAL, POLICE FIRED ON LOOTERS; EIGHT WERE KILLED AND 85 PEOPLE, INCLUDING 50 POLICEMEN, WERE INJURED. IN INDORE, RIOTERS RAIDED THE POST OFFICE. CURFEW WAS CLAMPED ON BOTH CITIES AND SCHOOLS WERE CLOSED UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1. ALTHOUGH OPPOSITION PARTIES APPEAR TO HAVE PLAYED NO MAJOR ROLE IN THE LATEST DEMONSTRATIONS, THE MADHYA PRADESH AUTHORITIES QUICKLY ARRESTED LEADING JANA SANGH AND SOCIALIST POLITICIANS.

2. URBAN DEMONSTRATIONS WERE ALSO REPORTED FROM KARNAL (HARYANA), WHERE POLICE LATHI-CHARGED JANA SANGH AND AKALI DEMONSTRATORS; FROM BANGALORE, WHERE 200 PICKETING FOOD SHOPS WERE ARRESTED; AND FROM DELHI, WHERE POLICE LATHI-CHARGED 2,000 JANA SANGH-LED AGITATORS WHO HAD RAIDED A GOVERNMENT-RUN "SUPER BAZAR" DEPARTMENT STORE.

3. PREDICTABLY, URBAN WHITE-COLLAR EMPLOYEES, WHO HAVE SUFFERED FROM THE UNPRECEDENTED INFLATION, WENT ON STRIKE, IN DELHI, PUNJAB, RAJASTHAN, AND UTTAR PRADESH, SECTIONS OF THE ELECTRIC POWER ENGINEERS WORK FORCE ENGAGED IN A "STAT-IN" (PARTIAL) STRIKE; POWER SUPPLY BECAME ERRATIC AND POSSIBLE SABOTAGE IS BEING INVESTIGATED. IN BOMBAY AND OTHER MAHARASHTRA CITIES, RESIDENT DOCTORS IN GOVERNMENT AND MUNICIPAL HOSPITALS ARE ON STRIKE. DELHI NURSES STRUCK FOR THREE DAYS UNTIL THEIR DEMANDS WERE CONCEDED. THE STRIKERS' MOTIVATION WAS NOT EXCLUSIVELY ECONOMIC. THE POWER ENGINEERS HAVE LONG BEEN RESTIVE OVER THEIR LOWER STATUS (AND PAY) VIS-A-VIS THEIR INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE SUPERVISORS. THEY WERE ALSO PROTESTING THE SUSPENSION ON CORRUPTION CHARGES OF PUNJAB STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD CHAIRMAN HARBANE SINGH. SINGH IS PRESIDENT OF THE ENGINEERS' ASSOCIATION, THE ALL INDIAN FEDERATION OF POWER ENGINEERS. THE NURSES' PRIMARY DEMAND WAS HOUSING NEAR HOSPITALS.

4. IN RAJASTHAN, STUDENTS OCCUPIED THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF RAJASTHAN UNIVERSITY IN JAIPUR AND LEFT ONLY AFTER THEIR ACADEMIC DEMANDS WERE MET. THE RAJASTHAN GOVERNMENT CLERICAL AND MENIAL WORKERS' STRIKE, WHICH WAS PUNCTUATED BY VIOLENCE DURING ITS 36 DAYS' DURATION, FINALLY ENDED. RAILWAY WORKERS RETURN TO WORK AUGUST 13; THEY DEFEATED GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO USE THE DIR AGAINST THEM AND ACHIEVED A FAVORABLE SETTLEMENT, INCLUDING THE RELEASE OF ALL ARRESTED STRIKERS.

R. THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA HAS ADVISED STATES TO USE THE DIR TO FIX PRICES OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES; MADHYA PRADESH, MAHARASHTRA, AND DELHI, INTER ALIA, HAVE DONE SO. WHETHER THESE DRACONIAN MEASURES WILL PROVE ANY MORE FEFFECTIVE AGAINST INFLATION THAN THEY HAVE AGAINST STRIKERS IS DOUBTFUL. TO DATE, RETAIL PRICES OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES HAVE DROPPED ONLY SLIGHTLY THEN GONE ON TO NEW HEIGHTS. THE OUTLOOK IS FOR CONTINUED SPORADIC DEMONSTRATIONS AND STRIKES AT LEAST THROUGH SEPTEMBER. MOYNIHAN

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